

Green Thumb Prints

Newsletter of the Hancock County
Master Gardener Volunteers



April 2010

*Gardening is our Passion
Education is our Purpose*



WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- **Unusual House Plants**
- **2010 All American Bedding Plant**
- **Three Sisters**
- **Discouraging Canada Geese**

Dates to Remember!

Mondays: 9:00-noon, workstation (see page 7)

Fridays: 9:00 am (or whatever time fits your schedule, Demonstration Garden Work

Thursday, April 8: Spring Recognition Dinner, Birchaven, 6:15 Hors d'oeuvres, 7:00 Dinner

Saturday, April 10: Container Gardening and Art in the Garden 10 - 11 am Oakwoods Nature Preserve, Ruth Furiate & Cathy Zernechel presenters

April 10: Spring into Gardening, 8:45-3:00 pm, Putnam Co. MGVs, Miller City. Reservations needed for classes.

Wednesday, April 21: WFIN Phone Club, 9:00-11:00, Bill Lanning and Dick Schweitzer

Upcoming Events

April 22: Rain Garden Workshop, Ag Center, 6:30 pm
Plants to use in Rain Gardens. Register please with
Soil & Water Office (419-422-6569)

May 15: Making Rain Barrels - 9 am Riverbend

May 8 & 15: Let's Go Gardening - Tracey Pierce &
Dianne Solis coordinating

May 16-22: State MGV Week

Coordinator's Corner

—By Nancy Kronberg

My apologies for the tardiness of this newsletter. Kay had her part finished last week. I have been enjoying the beautiful weather instead of adding my finishing touches. Last Wednesday Bill Jones, Bill Lanning, Marty Davis and I were in Wooster for the 2010 Phenology Workshop. Lots of great information including another insect pest, the viburnum leaf beetle (VLB), which is causing damage to some viburnum species. More on that in a future GTP.

Thanks to Cathy Zernechel for scheduling Leisure Living Show volunteers. Thanks to Marilynn Beltz, Jim Barnhill, Dick Schweitzer, and Bill Jones for their assistance setting up and/or tearing down our booth. Since we didn't know until the Wednesday prior to the show what size booth we would have, it was impossible to ask for any mgv assistance designing the booth. Thanks to everyone's prior efforts, we had all the display materials ready to go. All I had to do was add flowers (requested by Vaun) and hardscapes. The addition of the park benches (on loan from the Ag Service Center) was a nice touch. I chose to use them instead of chairs in the booth which would have blocked the display materials. Many folks used them to rest while I was there.

Watch for my article on "Seedless Plants" in the May GTP. Too much "playing in the dirt" to get it finished for this month.

Happy Spring to all,
Nancy

Unusual Houseplants

Venus Flytrap

The Venus flytrap (*Dionaea muscipula*), pitcher plant and sundew are carnivorous plants that are occasionally grown as houseplants. Carnivorous plants don't survive solely by "eating" insects and other prey. Carnivorous plants, as all green plants, contain chlorophyll and manufacture food via photosynthesis. Insects and other small creatures are simply a supplemental food source for carnivorous plants.

Carnivorous plants have more exacting requirements than most commonly grown houseplants. Carnivorous plants require a moist, acidic growing medium, high relative humidity and adequate light.

Excellent containers for carnivorous plants include a fish aquarium or large terrarium. A piece of plexiglass placed over the top will help maintain a high relative humidity. Ventilation can be provided by keeping the plexiglass slightly ajar.

A suitable growing medium for carnivorous plants consists of two parts sphagnum peat moss and one part coarse sand. If using a fish aquarium or terrarium, place one inch of coarse gravel on the bottom before adding the growing medium.

Good lighting is essential for carnivorous plants. A south or west-facing window that receives several hours of direct sun is usually the best location in the home. A fluorescent light fixture containing two 40-watt tubes can be used in poorly lit areas. Place the fixture a few inches above the plants. Daytime temperatures should be 70 to 75 F during the summer and 55 to 60 F in winter. When watering carnivorous plants, use rain or distilled water. Tap water may be too alkaline or contain too many minerals.



Finally, there is usually no need to fertilize carnivorous plants. These plants are native to areas with low nutrient levels. If you

do fertilize, a very dilute solution of fish emulsion once a month in spring and summer should be sufficient. Do not feed carnivorous plants raw meat.

ZZ Plant

The ZZ plant (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*) is a tough, easy to grow houseplant. It tolerates low levels of light, prolonged dry periods and neglect. Plants have few insect or disease problems. *Zamioculcas zamiifolia* is also known as aroid palm, eternity plant and fat boy.

The ZZ plant performs best in bright, indirect light. However, it will tolerate very low levels of light. Direct, afternoon sun actually may damage the plant's foliage. The plant prefers to be kept on the dry side. When watering, water plants thoroughly. Some water should flow out the bottom of the pot. Discard any excess water. Allow the potting soil to dry nicely before watering again. In most cases, a thorough watering every seven to 14 days is usually fine.

Problems can develop if the plant is watered too frequently and the potting soil is constantly wet. In spring and summer, fertilize once or twice a month with a dilute fertilizer solution.

The ZZ plant grows rather slowly. When it grows, it tends to grow in spurts. Plants are propagated by leaf cuttings and division.

The ZZ plant is poisonous to humans and pets if ingested.



Source: ISU Extension
Photos: Botony.si.edu

Snapdragon F1 'Twinny Peach'



2010 AAS Bedding Plant Winner

Who took the snap out of Snapdragon? 'Twinny Peach' the AAS Winner, is a snapdragon without the snap. Why? Because it is a double or butterfly flower form that does not have the jaws or joints to snap. The double flower form is the origin for the name 'Twinny' or twins. Another unique quality is the blend of peach tone colors. The soft shades of peach, yellow and light orange are distinct, and no other snapdragon offers this range of colors. Match 'Twinny Peach' with blue tones of *Salvia farinacea* or purple foliage plants and your garden will be a knockout. In the full sun garden, 'Twinny Peach' will produce abundant flower spikes, plenty to cut and place in vases for fresh indoor bouquets. Plants will continue to flower all season with little garden care. Like all snapdragons, 'Twinny Peach' is easy to grow and it exhibited heat tolerance in the AAS Trials. This new variety was bred by HEM Genetics.



What are botanical insecticides?

Botanicals are naturally occurring insecticides derived from plants. Pyrethrum is the best known and most widely used botanical insecticide. Pyrethrum is a mixture of different insecticidal compounds found in the dried flower head of the pyrethrum daisy (*Chrysanthemum cinerariaefolium*). Other botanicals include rotenone (extracted from the roots of several subtropical legumes), sabadilla (derived from the dried, mature seeds of *Schoenocaulon officinale*), and ryania (made from the ground stems of *Ryania speciosa*).

One of the newer botanical insecticides is Neem. Neem is derived from the neem tree, *Azadirachta indica*. Like synthetic insecticides, botanicals may be toxic to bees, fish, domestic animals and humans. Before using any pesticide, carefully read and follow label directions.

Master Gardener Volunteer Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 11, 2010

President Bill Jones called the meeting to order with approximately 31 members present. Bill commented about things happening in the garden which indicated spring was on the way.

Vice President, Marty Davis was out of town – no report

Minutes from the Secretary's report were approved by Pat Flinn and seconded by Norma Smith.

Bill and Anita Lanning reported that income from two presentations was collected and that expenses paid out were for support fees and name badges.

Nancy addressed the following:

March 27th-Master Gardeners would be participating in the Eggcitement program being held in downtown Findlay

March 25th is a joint project with SWCD Park District on rain barrels and rain gardens

Need a coordinator to head up the State MGV week state project (week of May 16th – 22nd).

"Make Your Own Rain Barrels" will be offered on May 15th.

Spring MGV training classes were officially cancelled. Not enough people signed up. Will move forward with another training class in the fall.

April 16th – Invasive Workshop in Toledo

October 14th – "Third Grade Days" at Van Buren State Park

Dick Deerhake passed out a sign up sheet for the Demo Gardens. First workday to be held on Friday at 9:00. Talked a little bit about Community Gardens.

The Recognition Dinner will be held at Birchaven this year at \$18 per person. Marilyn Beltz passed out reservation forms.

Ruth Furiate was out of town – no report.

Linda Dyar indicated that she is still missing hours for 2009. Need them in now.

Signup sheets for "Let's Go Gardening" were passed around. Still needed a confirmation from Menard's.

Cathy Z indicated that all time slots were filled for the Leisure Living Show. We should know the booth location by the Thursday before. She also passed out a sign up sheet for the workstation.

We are to email ideas to Marty Davis for possible field trips. "Hidden Gardens" in Michigan was an idea. Marty will be looking into that.

Advanced training will be continued in July since April will be the Recognition Banquet, May the plant exchange &, June the MGV Picnic Bob Campbell presented his topic on "Slime Mold" prior to the meeting tonight. It was very well received.

The plant exchange will be the May 13th this year at Bill Jones house.

The picnic will be at the home of Tracey Pierce on June 10th.

Kay Sidaway passed around a boxed kit she received- everything needed to plant a tree. Nancy talked about a book in the workstation – "Botany for Gardeners".

A motion was made by Dick Deerhake to adjourn the meeting with a second by Linda Dyar. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

The next meeting will be the Recognition Dinner at Birchaven on April 8th.

Respectfully submitted

Cathy Zernehel, Secretary

Three Sisters

What is a Three Sisters Garden?

It is an ancient method of gardening using an intercropping system which grows corn, beans, and squash crops simultaneously in the same growing area that is typically a rounded mound of soil, often called a hill.

- Corn is the oldest sister. She stands tall in the center.
- Squash is the next sister. She grows over the mound, protecting her sisters from weeds and shades the soil from the sun with her leaves, keeping it cool and moist.
- Beans are the third sister. She climbs through squash and then up corn to bind all together as she reaches for the sun. Beans help keep the soil fertile by converting the sun's energy into nitrogen filled nodules that grow on its roots. As beans grow, they use the stored nitrogen as food.

How Do I Grow a Three Sisters Garden?

In mid-Spring clear a sunny garden area of grasses, weeds, and large stones.

The area should be roundish in shape and at least eight feet across. Cover the area with a few inches of compost or well rotted manure. Turn the compost in to loosen the ground and create a moisture retaining growing medium with increased fertility. Water it well. Check the growing area frequently over the next few weeks to remove any sprouted weeds.

In late-Spring sow about seven or eight corn seeds in the center of the growing circle, in a ring pattern, spaced out about six inches from each other. Plant the corn seeds an inch under the soil, firm the soil above by patting it down with the palm of



your hand. Water the growing mound well. The corn will sprout and begin to grow in about two weeks.

After the corn has grown to about ten inches high, using a hoe or hand trowel, pull up some soil from the growing mound around the base of the corn stalks. The corn should not be buried entirely, it's upper half should be above the soil that has been mounded around it's stems. The corn will send roots into the mounded soil to hold it steady and upright in the wind.

After mounding soil around the base of the corn stalks sow about a dozen pole bean seeds in a ring pattern six inches outside the corn stalks. Push the bean seeds about an inch under the soil and firm the ground above them by patting it down with your hand. Water the growing mound well. The beans will usually begin to sprout in about 7-14 days.

About a week after the beans sprout, sow six or seven squash seeds in a ring about 12-15" outside the beans. Push the squash seeds about an inch under the soil and firm the ground above them by patting it down with your hand. The squash seeds will sprout in about a week.

As the corn grows, the beans will begin to climb. You can help them early on by wrapping the bean vines around the corn stalks. The squash will begin to grow it's vines and the large squash leaves will soon cover the growing mound and shade its soil. On occasion help the squash continue to cover the mound by turning the ends of it's vines towards the center of the mound. Water the mound well during weeks where there has been little or no rain.

When can we harvest our Three Sister's Garden?

Corn may be harvested while in it's green corn

(Continued on page 6)

Three Sisters—Continued

(Continued from page 5)

stage, but traditionally it is left to ripen and is harvested in Autumn. The cob is sun dried and stored for winter use. To harvest green corn observe the silky threads coming from the tops of the ears, when the silk is dry and a dark brown color the corn may be harvested. To remove an ear of corn, hold the stalk a few inches below the ear. Pull the tip of the ear toward the ground until it snaps off.

Beans may be eaten fresh or allowed to mature and dry on the vine. Fresh beans can be harvested when the pods are firm and crisp, but before the seeds within the pods have begun to swell. Pick beans in late morning after the night-dew has dried from the plants. This helps to prevent the spread of bacteria which can harm the plants. Pick the beans carefully to avoid bruising or snapping the growing vines. Bean plants will continue to flower and more bean pods will develop if they are harvested before bean seeds can mature.

Squash should be picked only after its skin has hardened thoroughly. Be careful to not damage or break off the stem of the squash...this can wound the squash and it will begin to rot. Cut the stem 3-4" from the fruit with a sharp knife. Allow the squash to sit in the sun for a few days to cure and the stem to dry. Store squash in a single layer and not touching each other, which can foster rot. Squash can last at least two months, depending on the variety.

Enjoy growing your Three Sisters Garden!



Source: Cornell University, Cooperative Extension,
Wyoming County

Is it possible to discourage Canada geese from habitating on your lawn, garden, & pond?

Most goose problems in urban and suburban areas are caused by the Canada goose, which is probably the most adaptable of waterfowl. Because they are generally tolerant of human activity, Canada geese will establish territories and nest around any suitable pond or stream. Not surprisingly, their presence on lawns, golf courses, cemeteries, school yards, backyards, and farms can cause problems, including damage to landscaping, gardens, crops, and water quality.

As with all nuisance wildlife problems and damage concerns, changing your level of tolerance is the easiest solution. You must ultimately decide what level of damage warrants action. If you choose to manage your wildlife problems, remember that there seldom are quick solutions. The good news is that there are steps that you can take to reduce conflicts with geese. The key to successful management, however, is to act when the geese first arrive on your property and to be persistent.

Habitat modification is the most successful approach to dealing with goose problems. Allowing tall, thick vegetation to grow around ponds or in open areas will deter geese from using an area. If lawn is a must, then geese can be discouraged by reducing fertilizer applications to make grass less palatable and/or nutritious, planting less palatable species such as tall fescue, and eliminating nesting cover. Do not let anyone feed the geese.

Another option is to begin scare tactics as soon as the geese arrive on your property. Visual repellents include large flags, trash bags, scarecrows, helium balloons, and reflective mylar tape. Devices should be moved every 2-3 days to prevent habituation and used as soon as a problem is detected. Loud noises from a variety of sources such as propane exploders, leaf blowers, shell crackers, electronic alarms, air horns, or sirens also can be effective at frightening geese. Dogs can harass geese until they leave the area. In order to be successful, you need to be persistent with your scare tactics.

Canada geese are protected by federal and state laws. However, with proper permission, trapping and shooting can be effective methods to deal with problem geese. Especially in rural areas, increasing the number of hunters on your property can bring relief. In Ohio, Canada geese are hunted in the fall and winter. Check with state wildlife officials for current regulations and special permits.

Source: Webgarden



Do butterflies actually use butterfly houses?

Butterfly houses are also known as butterfly roosts and hibernation boxes. Supporters claim these birdhouse-sized structures encourage butterflies to stay in your garden by providing necessary shelter.

Butterfly houses are attractive additions to the home garden. However, several studies have shown that the boxes are virtually never used by butterflies. (Spiders, wasps and mice are the most common occupants of butterfly houses.) The few butterflies that do remain for the winter appear to find sufficient natural hiding places under dead leaves, twigs and wood piles, where they hang upside down with their wings folded together.

The best encouragement for butterflies is to diversify your landscape. Plant a wide variety of flowers and plants that are attractive to butterflies and will feed the hungry caterpillars. Also, reduce insecticide use as much as possible.

Source: ISU Extension

Thank you—

Thanks to Bob Campbell for your educational presentation on slime molds prior to our March monthly meeting. Now when we see something disgusting that looks like vomit in our lawns, we can recognize what it is.

Thanks to Nancy Kronberg for your informative educational program on conifers prior to the January monthly meeting. The presentation was excellent as well as the handouts.

Thank You

Thanks to Barb Sherman, Mary Jane Bowland, and Terrie Cortez for providing refreshments at the March Monthly Meeting.

Workstation Schedule:

Mondays 9:00—Noon

April 5: Bill Jones / Marty Davis

April 12: Carol Brumbaugh

April 19: Ruth Furiate

April 26: Cathy Grossman/Duane Rettig

Don't plant too early!!!!

When can you safely plant tender annuals and vegetables outdoors?



Even though May 16 (Toledo) or May 19 (Lima) are considered the frost free dates for this area and considered the "safe" planting dates for most tender plants, you need to allow the soil to warm up as well. If a gardener has raised beds, which allow the soil to warm up faster than soil in ground beds, then installing tender plants after the frost free date may work. However, installing tender plants in cold soil in ground beds, especially if the soil is wet, can lead to root and/or crown rots, and possibly phosphorus deficiency, which causes the plant foliage to turn a purplish color. Part of gardening is practicing patience, so don't plant too early!



The Master Gardener *Green Thumb Print* is a publication of the Hancock County Extension Office, 7868 Hancock County Road 140, Findlay, OH, 45840, 419-422-3851. The Master Gardener Coordinator is Nancy Kronberg.

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